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**Corder, Octavius (1829 – 1910).**

Posted on [January 27, 2013](#) by [Chris](#)

The first record of the plant in Britain was published in the year 1860, by Thomas Corder, F.L.S. (died 1874), of Kempston, in Bedfordshire. According to Gibson,\* the plant had been first observed growing at Fyfield, near Ongar, in Essex, in the previous year (1859), not by Thomas Corder, but by his brother, Octavius Corder, a skilled chemist and botanist, who then lived at Fyfield Hall, and died, aged 81, on 5th January 1910, at Brundall, near Norwich. The discovery was, however, recorded by Thomas Corder, who, writing on 20th August, says † that the plant was “found abundantly in almost every cornfield and hedgerow in the parish, and also in the adjoining one of Willingale Spain, and probably in High Ongar. In some places [he continues], it is so abundant as to damage the corn; and it has grown in the same fields for the last sixty years at least, according to the testimony of old men living at Fyfield, so no doubt can exist as to its being a truly wild plant. I suggest that it may be called the ‘Fyfield Pea.’”

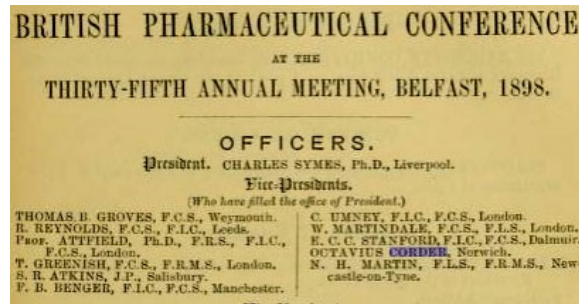
Journal of Botany : [British and Foreign, Volume 48](#)



Octavius Corder’s botanical ‘claim to fame’ centres on the [Fyfield Pea](#) (aka : ***Lathyrus tuberosus***) though its entry into botanical literature was recorded by his brother Thomas (1812-1873), who was a distinguished botanist and Fellow of the Linnean Society. There was debate as to the ‘origins’ of the pea – for example, was it introduced through ballast.

Thomas Corder, the father of Thomas and Octavius, was a farmer in Essex – and Octavius was born at Widford Hall : January 19th 1829. His birth is recorded in the records of The Society of Friends. Though he held the tenancy of a farm at [Fyfield Hall](#) in the 1860’s , he had trained as a pharmaceutical chemist in Chelsea (Sloane Square), under the direction of Robert Alsop (sic).

Octavius married Emma Spence in March 1854, but she died in 1855 ([tuberculosis?](#)). His second marriage was to Margaret Ann Hall in February 1858 – and they had a number of children (10?). In 1861, he was resident at Fyfield Hall, Essex and described as a farmer, working 290 (?) acres and employing nine men and three boys. But by 1871, he had moved to London Street, Norwich and was working as a pharmaceutical chemist. In 1881, the census records him at Swan Lane, Bedford Street, St Andrews, Norwich. In 1884, he was appointed an examiner for the Pharmaceutical Society (in Botany) and he took on apprentices.



He was elected to membership of the [Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists Society](#) in 1873, serving on the council in 1882, and President in 1890 ?? He died at Brundell (just outside Norwich) in January, 1910.

Some Corder specimens have appeared on H@H : click [here](#)

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